

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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STEEL SHOT FOR 12 GAUGE ONLY THIS FALL

Waterfowl hunters who use shotguns bigger or smaller than the 12 gauge are exempt from mandatory use of steel shot for at least next fall, according to a final rulemaking by the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The steel loads will be mandatory for 12 gauge in areas designated for non-toxic shot. But guns with larger or smaller bores are not affected by the rulemaking, published in the August 2, 1977, Federal Register.

Steel shot is the only approved non-toxic shot and it has been manufactured in 12 gauge only. Therefore the Service has decided that in the waterfowl hunting season beginning in the fall of 1977, shells other than 12 gauge loaded with lead or other metals can be used to hunt waterfowl in steel shot zones. The rule permits use of toxic shot for the 10 gauge as well as all other gauges except 12 gauge.

Approximately 85 percent of all waterfowl hunters use the 12-gauge shotgun. The ruling states that the hunter who is taking waterfowl in a designated steel shot zone with 12-gauge shells loaded with toxic shot in his possession will be in violation of the regulation. Waterfowl hunters possessing these loads in other gauges will not be in violation.

The Service points out that this exemption for gauges that have not been manufactured in steel shot will be reviewed again prior to the 1978 hunting season to determine whether it should be continued for that season. The Service has proposed that in the fall of 1979 no further exceptions be made based on gauge. These exceptions lessen the effectiveness of efforts to reduce lead poisoning among waterfowl using the zones.

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